



CTC TECH TALK



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Lelooska, 1965

A Little CTC History

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One of the perks of my job as the site supervisor at CTC is that I get to delve into the history of the facility and some of its unique possessions. Two items that are unusual and worthy of note are our 18-foot totem pole and our Dawn Redwood tree.

Our totem pole was carved in 1965 by Don Lelooska. As is traditional, it is carved from a single Western Red Cedar log. It has three primary figures on it; the topmost figure is an eagle, the middle figure a grizzly bear, and the bottom figure a beaver. The pole was commissioned by Crown Zellerbach and the figures were selected by the company for their symbolism. The eagle, our national bird, represents our country. The bear with the salmon in its paws symbolizes the Pacific Northwest and the natural bounties of this area of the country. Finally, the beaver, as nature's engineer, represents the development of our resources by the company.

Totem poles are an art form developed by the Indians of the Northwest Coast. These Indians live on a narrow strip of land between the sea and the mountains stretching from northern Vancouver Island in British Columbia up to Yakutat Bay in Alaska. Several tribes lived along this coast from the Kwakiutl in the south to the Tlingit in the north. These tribes shared in the bounties of this rich coast which afforded them the time to develop the sophisticated art form that permeated

their entire life. Although we are most familiar with the totem poles as representative of this art form, they are only one aspect of it. The Northwest Coast Indians' rich ceremonial life included dances performed by individuals wearing masks carved to represent the real and mythical creatures and beings of their world. These masks were in some cases very intricate, having numerous moving parts and weighing up to 60 pounds. The art was so intertwined with the lives of these people that most of the items used in their daily lives — their clothes, bowls, spoons, storage containers, and even fish hooks — were intricately decorated with carving, painting, and weaving.

During the early 1900's the Canadian government banned the ceremonies and confiscated many of the belongings of these native people with many of the artifacts ending up in museums worldwide. In the 1950's the bans were lifted. Since that time artists from the various tribes have been working to revive the art. Don Lelooska and his family have been instrumental in the efforts to recreate the masks and ceremonies of the band of Kwakiutl led by his late adopted brother Chief James Sewid. In addition to being widely recognized artists in the Northwest Coast tradition, they present an educational program for 20,000 school children a year. These programs have been a highlight of the third grade education of Southwest Washington children for the past thirty years.

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